

Washington, DC -- Today, U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) put up another hurdle for the New York Regional Interconnect (NYRI) power line proposal by successfully amending the Rail & Public Transportation Security Act (H.R. 1401) to require the Departments of Homeland Security and Transportation to evaluate the safety and security of placing high voltage direct current electric transmission power lines along active railroad rights-of-way. Arcuri's amendment, presented yesterday to the House Rules Committee, passed the House this evening.

"This is one more step in our fight against NYRI and its ill-conceived and poorly-planned proposal," Arcuri said. "We are moving forward in the process of prohibiting NYRI from running roughshod over our local communities. Two weeks ago, a massive explosion rocked the town of Oneida - blocking traffic, shutting down the Thruway, closing schools, and displacing people in Oneida and Madison Counties. It is imperative that we consider the implications of placing a high voltage power line along railroad tracks that would literally run right through our backyards."

Arcuri's amendment will require the Secretary of Homeland Security, in coordination with the Secretary of Transportation, to conduct an assessment of the safety and security vulnerabilities of placing high voltage direct current electric transmission lines along active railroad rights-of-way.

The assessment shall, at a minimum, evaluate the risks to local inhabitants and consumers of electric power transmitted by those lines, associated with a train collision or derailment that damages the power lines. The amendment would also require the Secretary to report the findings of this assessment to Congress within six months of enactment of the Act.

"I am proud to announce that my amendment has passed the House with strong bi-partisan support, and will ensure that the health, safety, and well-being of our neighbors are considered before any power line proposal moves forward. As we learn more about the accident in Oneida and others in Upstate, we must consider the risks associated with running a high voltage power line near the rail tracks," Arcuri said.

In February, Arcuri and colleagues U.S. Reps. John Hall (D-Dover Plains) and Maurice Hinchey (D-Hurley) introduced two pieces of legislation that would effectively prevent the NYRI power line proposal from using federal eminent domain law to condemn private property along the proposed route.

Key provisions of H.R. 1401, which would strengthen rail safety around the country, include:

- Require the Administration to develop a security plan for covered transportation (railroad carriers, public transportation, and buses), which lays out the responsibilities of each applicable agency when it comes to transportation security, provides methods for agencies to work together, and provides a strategy for agencies to develop new technologies to secure covered transportation, among other things.
- Require the Department of Homeland Security to develop a plan to improve tactical and strategic information sharing with respect to threats and vulnerabilities to covered transportation with Federal, State, and local agencies.
- Authorize three grant programs totaling almost \$4 billion for improving rail security, public transportation, and bus security. All security-related grants are to be administered on the basis of risk.
- Increase the number of Surface Transportation Security Inspectors from the current 100 to 600 by 2010.
- Establish the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium within the Department of Homeland Security to assist State and local emergency responders with training.
- Require the Department of Homeland Security to implement a threat assessment screening program for employees of covered transportation providers, including a check against terrorist watch lists.
- Require the Administration to issue regulations requiring enhanced security measures for shipments of security sensitive materials, so that these materials are not shipped through areas of heavy population as long as there is an existing alternate route.

A copy of Arcuri's floor statement upon introducing the Amendment is included below.

**The Honorable Michael A. Arcuri (NY-24)
In the House of Representatives
Opening Statement on Amendment to H.R. 1401
Tuesday, March 27, 2007**

Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment to H.R. 1401.

Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume and ask unanimous consent to revise and extend my remarks.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, my amendment to H.R. 1401, the Rail and Public Transportation Security Act, would address an important issue surrounding our nation's efforts to expand electric power to major urban areas – safety.

On the morning of March 12, 2007, a CSX freight train derailed approximately 34 cars near Oneida, NY. Reports indicate there was an evacuation covering a 1-mile radius. Luckily, there were no reported deaths or injuries. However, a large fire occurred at the scene and residents and emergency responders reported hearing secondary explosions. CSX provided information that there were 40 tank cars carrying liquid petroleum gas in the train. What's more the derailment closed the New York State Thruway for several hours, requiring traffic to be detoured miles out of the way.

Prior to this incident, there were 18 train derailments in Western New York between January 2005 and September 2006, which further suggests that the condition of New York State's freight railways are in need of serious attention and repair.

While this concern continues to trouble the people of New York, a private company is seeking to build a 190 mile high voltage direct current transmission line from the Town of Marcy in Oneida County, NY, located in my district, to the Town of New Windsor in Orange County, NY.

The company estimates that more than 90% of the proposed primary and alternate routes will follow existing rights-of-way – both along railroad tracks and natural gas lines. The transmission line would consist of 135-foot tall towers, and be operated with a rated power flow of 1200 mega watts. A portion of the proposed route follows the New York Susquehanna & Western Railway right-of-way, which would run through some of the more heavily populated cities and towns in Upstate New York. This is a situation where the consequences and risk are not only unknown, but wholly unnecessary.

For these reasons, my amendment to H.R. 1401 would require the Secretary of Homeland Security, in coordination with the Secretary of Transportation, to conduct an assessment of the safety and security vulnerabilities of placing high voltage direct current electric transmission lines along active railroad rights-of-way.

The assessment shall, at a minimum, evaluate the risks to local inhabitants and consumers of electric power transmitted by those lines, associated with a train collision or derailment that damages such electric transmission lines.

It's no secret that as our cities continue to grow they will require more energy. And I fully support addressing that need. But meeting that need must be done in a safe and responsible way.

To this end, my amendment simply requires the Departments of Homeland Security and Transportation to take a hard look at our existing rail infrastructure and assess the security vulnerabilities, so that we can avoid future electric power interruptions and preserve the safety of our constituents.

Thank you, I reserve the balance of my time.

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